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THE DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL STUDY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF THE UNITED STATES

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to show the development of historical study in the secondary schools from its crude beginnings in colonial times to the present scientific treatment of it. In order to do this it is necessary to understand the early development of history in England, the opinions of English educational writers concerning it, and the character of the early English textbooks of history, as these influenced colonial education, and as the textbooks were used in this country.

The data obtainable on the colonial secondary schools do not produce conclusions of the most definite kind. Advertisements of colonial schools may show in general the type of education, but whether the advertised curriculum was carried out or not is an uncertain point.

Of the secondary period, the accounts are meager and unsatisfactory. Reports of schools come late in the nineteenth century, and when the records of the secretaries of the boards of trustees of academies have been preserved the course of study either is left out entirely, or scant information concerning it is given. In New York, the reports of the Board of Regents on academies began late in the eighteenth century and continued throughout the nineteenth century. Unfortunately the early volumes are inaccessible and only the volumes commencing with 1836 have been used.

The high-school movement, which had its early beginnings in Massachusetts, has been fully treated in a doctoral dissertation by Alexander J. Inglis, of Columbia University.

The reports of the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Seven give the later conditions of history study, and have had great influence in shaping the present teaching of history.

I. THE ENGLISH BACKGROUND

*The beginnings of history as a secondary subject in England.*¹—In the pre-Reformation schools there was little that could be called historical study. The effect of the Renaissance on history was indirect, causing a desire to understand the events found in the classics. History was not regarded as a subject study, and the scientific treatment of it was developed later, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "Fragmentary history" describes this early condition. Historical quotations were used freely as this gave variety and illustrations for themes and orations.

When historians began to write in English the readers were chiefly of the nobility. It was not until the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century that history was regarded as a subject to be read by any class other than the nobility.

The establishment of history as an academic subject was in 1622, when William Camden, a history-writer and traveler, and headmaster of Westminster School (1583-99), endowed a readership in the University of Oxford. In 1628 a lectureship was established in history at Cambridge. It is interesting to note that it was the headmaster of Westminster School who took this first step.

In the seventeenth century greater interest was evidenced in history. History was regarded as reading-matter, a graduate subject, and a study for the nobility, clergy, and gentry. These three classes were looked on as the representatives of the "people in the Body Collective, who had not the abilities to read and much less to judge."²

There were three channels through which history gradually sifted into secondary schools. Probably the most important one was the several headmasters who were noted historians. Alexander Ross (1652), headmaster of the Southampton Grammar School, expressed his opinion in his preface to his history, that history was necessary for schoolmasters, so that the pupils may have matter for their orations and exercises.³ Richard Knolles,

¹ The material for this topic is based on Foster Watson, *The Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Subjects in England*, chap. ii, pp. 45-88.

² Foster Watson, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

headmaster of Sir Roger Manwood's Grammar School at Sandwich, and Mr. John Langley, headmaster of St. Paul's School in the Commonwealth, were two other historians who probably enlivened their teaching with their knowledge.

The second one was a few textbooks written with the direct purpose of being used in the schools. Coote, in his *English Schoolmaster*, 1556, made a brief chronology, "so that a Grammar scholar may learn to know when his authors, both Greek and Latin, lived, and when the principal histories in them were done." *Angloricum Praelia*, written in 1580 by Christopher Osland, a schoolmaster, was the first book published intended for school use and for the development of patriotism. It was written in Latin verse, and was an account of the wars of England between 1327 and 1522, and also contained a poem on Queen Elizabeth and the peaceful state of England. This book was ordered by the Privy Council to be used in the grammar schools, and was well recommended.

The third channel was the long histories which were epitomized, and in that way developed into texts fit for secondary schools.

Geography¹ was closely correlated with history and was regarded as necessary for an understanding of history. Thus the two studies had much the same development.

Summarizing, we find that both history and geography did not occupy distinctive places in the education of youth, that the value of them was relative to other subjects, and that only higher classes were supposed to study them. The development of history as a secondary-school subject is shown by the facts that (1) longer accounts were epitomized; (2) schoolmasters were historians; (3) the value of such a subject was being realized; (4) history was needed for a better understanding and appreciation of the classics.

The character of history textbooks previous to the Revolution.—The eight historical textbooks, all printed in the eighteenth century, which were examined, were two on Roman history, two on English, one a chronology, and three compendiums. They were all written for students, but only one recommended itself directly to schools.²

¹ *Op. cit.*, chap. iii.

² *A New and Easy Method to Understand the Roman History*, etc. Done out of French, with very large Additions and Amendments, by Mr. Thomas Brown. 1731.

Extracts from these will show their content, character, and in some cases, the method of using the text.

Doctor Historicus or, A Short System of Universal History and an Introduction to the Study of It, by Thomas Hearne, M.A., of St. Edinburgh Hall, Axon, 1705, contains three books in the first volume; the first is a chronology of "all the most celebrated Persons and Actions from the Creation to this Time"; the second book is an introduction to history, "wherein an account is given of the writings of the Ancient Historians, Greek and Roman, with the Judgement of the Best Criticks upon Them, together with an Ample Collection of English Historians"; the third book is a "compendium History of all the Ancient Monarchies and States from the Creation to the Birth of Christ, Extracted from the most Celebrated Authors, Ancient and Modern, Coins, Inscriptions, Manuscripts," etc.

A book which had its eighth edition in 1731, and which was written as a dialogue, was *A New and Easy Method to Understand the Roman History with an Exact Chronology of the Reign of the Emperors, an Account of the most eminent Authors, when they flourished; and an abridgement of the Roman Antiquities and Customs*.

A New History of England by Questions and Answers Extracted from the most Celebrated English Historians, 1742, had for its purpose the "introduction of the English Youth to the Knowledge of the history of their native country."

In the preface of *Chronology made familiar and easy to young Gentlemen and Ladies to which is added a Table of the most remarkable Events from the Beginning of the World to the Year 1747*, the author said that chronology was absolutely necessary to give "Light to History which is the most instructive and useful, as well as entertaining Part of Literature." Chronology was also "one of the eyes of history." Without chronology "all history would be little better than a Heap of Confusion, destitute of Light, Order, or Beauty."¹

In the *Students Pocket Dictionary; or Compendium of Universal History, Chronology, and Biography*, by Thomas Mortimer, Esq.,

¹ *Chronology made familiar and easy to young Gentlemen and Ladies*, chap. i. Evidently taken from Locke.

1777, there were two parts, Part I containing a compendium of universal history, and Part II a compendium of biography.

A companion book to the *Chronology* was a *Geography made familiar and easy to young Gentlemen and Ladies* published in the same Circle of Sciences, 1748. The author in the preface said: "It is confessed on all hands that the knowledge of history is one of the best accomplishments we can possess; it gives no Experience without grey hairs, and makes us wise at the labour and expense of others." But it was necessary to have some previous knowledge of the rudiments of geography "which together with chronology has been justly termed the Eyes and Feet of History." He then quoted Locke to prove his point. In teaching geography, the instructor should embellish it with history.

Another source of historical information was in the "companions" that were popular during the eighteenth century. *The Young Man's Book of Knowledge; Being a Proper Supplement to the Young Man's Companion*, by D. Feming, 1764, illustrates this. Part I contains a chronology, and Part V contains an account of Judaism, Paganism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and heathen mythology. This book was recommended to the public in general, also to schools, by six schoolmasters.

Thus it may be seen that the treatment of history in books was of the chronological all-inclusive type. The classical side of history was another important feature. The method in use was that of question and answer, or dialogue.

Summary.—Early in the eighteenth century history held a prominent place in the thoughts of men who were interested in education. They saw the narrowness of the curriculum and, in trying to overcome that, recommended history as a liberal study. History was regarded as useful not only in connection with the classics, but also for its own sake. This is a favorable background, but it required two centuries before history became scientifically treated in its teaching.

The histories which were written at this time were crammed, one might say, with facts, but were historical hodgepodes, and did not touch the problematical side of history.

II. THE COLONIAL PERIOD

Types of the colonial secondary schools.—There were three main types of secondary schools in the colonies. The New England Latin grammar schools were founded for the specific purpose of preparing students for the university. This narrowed the course of study to the classical languages, and consequently history did not appear in the early curriculum. A few schools of private nature included history in their curricula.

As a result of the undemocratic attitude of these schools, private schools, offering a liberal course of education, sprang up in large numbers, especially in the well-populated centers. In Charleston, South Carolina, from 1760 to 1770, there were forty-three different schools of this type advertised in the newspapers. It was in these schools that history was occasionally taught.

The third type was the academy, which had its greatest growth after the Revolution. Benjamin Franklin was the first to use the name academy in this country. There are a few other cases where the name was used. These early academies had the same aim as the private schools, and their curricula were similar. It is very likely that many of the private schools developed into the incorporated academies of the following period.

In South Carolina there were nine school advertisements which included history in their course of study.¹ These were all in Charleston.

In the *South Carolina Gazette*, December 10, 1772, an academy for the eduction of youth was advertised to be opened by James Thomson, A.M., of New Jersey College. Its curriculum consisted of Latin and Greek and "such knowledge of the Antiquities, Mythology, and Geography of Greece and Rome as assist them greatly to relish the Spirit and Beauties of the ancient writers."

Another interesting advertisement was for the opening of a class for six young gentlemen, who, in addition to the study of the English language, would be initiated into the first principles of arithmetic, geometry, geography, history, and moral philosophy.

¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, October 9, 1762; November 30, 1747; October 22, 1750; June 15, 1767; May 17, 1770; October 20, 1771; December 10, 1772; February 21, 1749; June 20, 1769.

The remainder of the advertisement reflected the opinions of the English educational writers.

The utility of such an undertaking as this is, is too obvious to need any Recommendation, for however necessary the acquisition of the Latin and Greek tongues may be for those who are to be bred up in one or other of the learned Professions; yet surely it can be of little Consequence to those, who are to spend their Days in rural, mercantile, or mechanical employments, to pass away six or seven years in the study of dead Languages.¹

In these nine schools, classes, or projected schools, these courses were offered: history, not designating any special field, six; chronology, two; history of Great Britain, one; Roman and Greek history, one; ancient history, one; antiquities, one. From the specified fields, one can see that history which was related to the classics was evidently in demand.

In Maryland the schools advertised were mostly elementary plus Latin and Greek. There were also science schools, that is, schools which offered courses in mathematics, surveying, and navigation. There was no mention of history.²

In Georgia the conditions were much the same as in Maryland.³

Another way in which children were educated is shown in the following advertisement:

Colonel Nathaniel West Dandridge of Hanover County who maintains a tutor in his family is willing to accommodate ten pupils. . . . The branches of learning which the present tutor professes to teach are Reading, Writing, English, Latin and Greek, Grammar, Arithmetic, Book-Keeping, Ancient and Modern Geography, Chronology, History, Greek and Roman antiquities, mythology, etc.⁴

In New Jersey the same kind of private schools was in existence as in the southern colonies. There were found three references to history, two concerning the same school.

The students who attended the grammar school in connection with Princeton College were allowed to hear the public lectures on composition, criticism, chronology, and history.⁵ In this same school at an earlier date the Roman and Greek antiquities were

¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, June 29, 1769.

² Files of *Maryland Gazette*.

³ No mention of history in the *Georgia Gazette*.

⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, October 8, 1772.

⁵ Advertised in the *Virginia Gazette*, December 2, 1773.

studied "so that the scholar would be able to explain any word that refers to the manners and customs of the ancients, or the constitution of their several states."¹

The third notice is interesting because it shows still another view of colonial education.² It can hardly be called secondary education because it was designated as for "Gentlemen of Learning," and some of the subjects to be taught were above secondary grade. The studies advertised were Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, logic, mathematics, philology, philosophy, antiquities of Greek and Hebrew history, and theology.

In New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania the schools were more for preparatory work than those in the southern colonies. One grammar school was opened to prepare students for New Jersey College. This did not offer history but did offer geography, rhetoric, logic, and such other branches of literature as would qualify students for any class in the college, or would be most useful in public life.³

A preparatory school for Kings College was run by Thomas Jackson, who taught the Latin and Greek languages with the geography and antiquities requisite for the classics.⁴

The ministers and elders of the French church, desirous of encouraging a French school, allowed William Clajen to open a school in the consistory room where he prepared to teach English grammar, the use of maps, the elements of geography and history, and the general principles of the English constitution.⁵

In Pennsylvania five schools offered history in some form or other. Four of them were in Philadelphia. The fifth was the Germantown Academy.

In a resolution of the board of the Germantown Academy, March 3, 1764, it was resolved that "the instructions of the Youth in Languages Grammatically, and with suitable lectures at the same time, and also in Arithmetic, Mathematics, History, Logic and other branches of learning, with lectures, will undoubtedly

¹ *New Jersey Archives*, 1st Series, Vol. XXI, "Newspaper Extracts," pp. 383-84, (March 2, 1768 or 1769).

² *Ibid.*, IV (1756-61), 326 (February 8, 1759).

³ *New York Gazette*, November 19, 1764.

⁴ *New York Gazette and Weekly Post Boy*, May 30, 1762.

⁵ *Ibid.*, June 5, 1776.

tend to the most effectual advancement and knowledge of the Scholars and also to the reputation of the School.”¹

One public grammar school in Philadelphia offered history in the fifth class.²

John Ormsby, “arrived lately from Newark College,” offered courses in dancing and sciences, and “those who may fancy to study history and geography shall be welcome to the master’s assistance without any additional expense.”³

Charles Fortesene, “late Free School Master,” taught the following subjects: the Latin tongue, English in a grammatical manner, navigation, surveying, mensuration, dialling, geography, use of globes, gentleman’s astronomy, chronology, arithmetic, and merchants’ accounts.⁴

The fifth announcement was that of the Academy of Philadelphia, opening for the winter term. This advertisement was published in the *Maryland Gazette*.⁵ The curriculum consisted of Latin, Greek, English, French, and German languages, together with history, geography, chronology, logic, and rhetoric; also writing, arithmetic, merchants’ accounts, geometry, algebra, surveying, navigation, astronomy, drawing in the perspective, and other mathematical sciences with natural and mechanic philosophy.

The Academy of Philadelphia was planned by Benjamin Franklin. In his *Sketch of an English School*, 1741, which was for the consideration of the trustees of the academy, history had an important place. His plan was as follows:

First and second classes: Spelling and reading.

Third class: Speaking properly and gracefully, elements of rhetoric, short speeches from Roman or other history to be memorized, also chronology and the beginning of the reading of history which will proceed through the other classes—Rollin’s *Ancient and Roman Histories* for the beginning, and ending with the best histories of our own nation and colonies.⁶ Also natural and mechanic history should be begun in this class.

Fourth class: Reading of history continued plus further instruction in chronology and geography.⁷

Fifth and sixth classes: Continuation of history reading.⁸

¹ Travis, *History of the Germantown Academy*, Smith ed.

² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 9, 1759.

³ *Ibid.*, September 20, 1753.

⁴ *Ibid.*, December 1, 1743.

⁵ *Maryland Gazette*, March 6, 1751. Dated Philadelphia, December 21, 1750.

⁶ *Franklin’s Works*, II, 128.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

This is the earliest recommendation for the study of American history. The only other case was in the grammar school of Thomas Byerley, New York, 1773. The plan of Franklin's historical courses was similar to that of George Turnbull in his *Observations upon Liberal Education*.

Franklin's plans for this academy were not carried out fully. In the original plans of the founders there were to be a Latin course and an English one. The rector was to be at the head of the Latin school, and was to receive two hundred pounds a year, for which he was to be obliged to teach twenty boys, without any assistance, the Latin and Greek languages, history, geography, chronology, logic, rhetoric, and the English tongue.¹ The English master was to receive one hundred pounds a year, for which he was to teach forty scholars, without any assistance, the English tongue grammatically, history, geography, chronology, logic, and oratory.

There was a quarrel between the Latinists and those believing in the English education. The English school was neglected, and the Latin emphasized, thus causing public dissatisfaction with the trustees.²

In Franklin's *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania* printed in 1759, the whole scheme of education was based on the study of history.³

The influence of other educational writers on Franklin is shown by his quotation of them. In this paper the authors quoted were Milton, Locke, *Dialogues on Education*, supposed to be by Mr. Hutchinson, professor in the college at Glasgow, Obadiah Walker, Mons. Rollin, Dr. Turnbull, and many others.⁴

In Massachusetts the same type of private school was in existence, but there was only one reference to historical study. A grammar school offered the following curriculum: reading, spelling, English grammar, arithmetic, letter-writing, composition in general, logic, rhetoric, oratory, the knowledge of the globe, geography, history, chronology, natural and moral philosophy, and the nature of civil government; also the "other parts of knowledge that are

¹ *Franklin's Works*, II, 139-40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³ Smyth, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, II, 386-96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, editorial note, p. 387.

necessary to form the minds of Youth for entering on the stage with Advantage, and to make an amiable figure in the World."¹

Only one report comes from Connecticut. Colonel John Trumbull, the painter, who was in Mr. Trisdale's Lebanon School about 1766, wrote that he had "read with care Rollin's *History of Ancient Nations*, also his *History of the Roman Republic*, Mr. Crevier's continuation of the *History of the Emperors*, and Rollin's *Art and Sciences of the Ancient Nations*."² This school was still in existence in 1783 and had acquired great celebrity, and was attended by scholars from a distance.³

No history was found in the curricula of schools of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and North Carolina.⁴

Before concluding, there is one line of evidence which does not refer especially to secondary-school history, but which shows an attitude on the part of the colonists for historical study and reading. In all the colonial newspapers there are lists of books advertised which had been imported by booksellers. In these lists, the educational writers appear many times.⁵ Locke, Sheridan, Rollin, Turnbull, *Dialogues on Education*, Clarke, Milton, and Rousseau are all mentioned. Textbooks of history,⁶ and general histories,⁷ as Clark's *Compend of Universal History*, *Helps to English History*, and Brown's *Roman History*, were also advertised. Benjamin Franklin advertised a variety of small histories.⁸ This shows that the colonies were not without history. If there had not been a demand for these books, the booksellers would not have imported them.

¹ *Boston Gazette*, October 26, 1772.

² Henry Barnard, *American Journal of Education*, XXVIII, 794-95.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 797.

⁴ Files of *New Hampshire Gazette*, *Newport Mercury*; Charles Lee Raper, *Church and Private Schools of North Carolina*.

⁵ *New York Mercury*, June 16, 1755; January 5, 1767; *New York Gazette*, September 19, 1765; August 13, 1761; *Pennsylvania Journal*, January 6, 1755; *Boston Chronicle*, April 25 to May 2, 1768.

⁶ *Pennsylvania Mercury*, December 31, 1731; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 21, 1730; April 12, 1729; *Georgia Gazette*, May 17, 1775; April 14, 1763; *Boston News Letter*, July 4, 1751; February 18, 1770.

⁷ *Pennsylvania Mercury*, December 31, 1731.

⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 6, 1737.

[To be continued]